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EL7001-8

Dr. Glen Gatin

Principles and Practices of E-Learning

Assignment 1: Concepts of E-Learning

Comments:

Faculty Use Only

Good start on this, Michael. You have organized your information well and introduced some interesting ideas. Your writing is clear and understandable for the most part. Work toward parsimony of expression; try to stay within page limits.

As this is a doctoral course specific expectations for scholarship exist. The course prompts seem to require a very concrete and descriptive response but it is up to you to demonstrate the abstract and conceptual approach characteristic of a doctoral scholar. The main overall objective of doctoral course work is to prepare scholars to make a contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge in the field, in this case, the highly emergent field of e-learning. To do this, a doctoral scholar must be conversant with the latest theoretical perspectives and must be able to use those perspectives as the organizing framework for a critical analysis of any given topic. Scholars must be familiar with the systematic research being conducted to test and verify any theory and must be able to find, evaluate, and use current peer-reviewed literature in support of all assertions.

To get started working with theories consider the importance that Hirumi (2012) places on the use of a sound theoretical framework for e-learning. Williams, Karousou, and Mackness, (2011) describe two paradigms or collections of theories – the prescriptive and the emergent. Within these two categories are a number of different theories. Sweller's (2011) theory of cognitive load is an example of a prescriptive theoretical perspective. For an emergent theoretical perspective see the special edition of the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning dedicated to Connectivism.

<http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/issue/view/44>

Try to choose a different theory for each activity in this course. Doctoral level scholarship is not concerned with administration, technology, implementation or practice; it is almost entirely dedicated to theories of how people learn in online environments.

As you prepare your next submission be sure you have:

- Chosen a current theoretical perspective of e-learning as the framework for your analysis.
- Identified the originator of the theory.
- Described how the theory explains and predicts learning behavior in online environments.
- Articulated the reason you have chosen this particular theory for the analysis of this course activity topic.
- Developed a critical analysis of the topic using current (last 3-5 years) primary and secondary sources from peer reviewed academic literature. Do not cite tertiary sources like dictionaries, encyclopedias or textbooks, they provide topics only.
- Identify the research which has been conducted to test and verify the theory you have chosen.
 - o What are the points of contention in the theory?
 - o Who are the principle investigators actively studying the theory?
 - o Where do they publish their work?
- Can you anticipate any objections to your conclusions?
- How would you refute criticism?
- Finally, draw a conclusion that ties your argument back into the theoretical framework you introduced.

I am always glad to provide more detailed information about doctoral level competencies and specific feedback in a Skype conversation.

Gatin June 25, 2013

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<http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/883>

A Look at the Challenges and Best Practice Solutions of e-Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify key challenges related to e-learning and provide best practice solutions in addressing these challenge. The need for solutions comes from the rapid development of technology related to e-learning and the challenges those developments are making for instructors and students of e-learning environments. Some references to the teacher or instructor are referred to as the e-mentor and the student or learner as the e-learner. Technology-assisted learning tools and new approaches to education are growing quickly while sound pedagogy of e-learning falls behind. The reason for this delay can be understood taking into account that more attention is paid to the rapid growth of technology rather than placing an emphasis on how the technologies are being used to learn. In this paper three different e-learning challenges are presented with best practice solutions provided for overcoming such challenges in an e-learning environment. Finally the paper will discuss the important elements to consider when presenting this information to faculty and staff.

Keywords: e-learning, pedagogy, andragogy, asynchronous, metacognitive, synchronous

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Comment [1]: Challenges

A Look at the Challenges and Best Practice Solutions of e-Learning

Students, in a traditional classroom environment, depend on the teacher to deliver, guide, manage, and maintain the flow of instruction using an asynchronous approach to education. The student views the teacher as an authority figure conveying information in a face-to-face learning environment (Martin, 2009). However, this is not the case in an online learning environment where there is a shift in the student-teacher relationship, the educational model, and the learning environment. The transition results in an e-learning approach to education. A successful e-learning environment encompass a blended educational approach to meet the needs of its learners and therefore, requires a look at the challenges and best practices in which e-mentors and e-learners will be faced as they navigate this environment.

Challenges and Best Practice Solutions

In order to understand the challenges associated with an e-learning environment it is important to define what the term e-learning means. Clark and Mayer help define e-learning as instruction delivered by any technological mode intended to promote learning (2003). E-

learning, is thought by many, to be an online only environment where there is a disconnect between teacher-student interactions and is mostly asynchronous (Hawkins, Graham, & Barbour, 2012). The “e” in e-learning can represent words like electronic, enhanced, and effective however, there are many other possibilities depending on the participant’s perspective, understanding, and level of metacognitive awareness. It is important to note that an effective e-learning environment incorporates both asynchronous and synchronous interactions (Mayer, 2003). Teaching and learning in this environment happens differently than in the traditional classroom and can present challenges to teachers and learners new to e-learning. Therefore, there are two roles in e-learning that must be considered when discussing ways to improve the challenges. The first is the teacher’s role, which carries the primary responsibility, and the second, which is the student’s role. Both roles include a transition away from traditional teacher-student relationships, roles, and responsibilities to more third space¹ like roles. However, it is the teacher’s primary role, which will help overcome challenges, support, and sustain student success in an e-learning environment. In this new learning environment the teacher is now called an e-mentor, and the student the e-learner.

New Digital Divide

In education, the digital divide is most commonly defined as the gap between those students that have, and do not have, access to the internet and the information technologies that are currently transforming education (Bernard, 2011; Hall, 2013). According to Warschauer (2003), the “digital divide is marked not only by physical access to computers and connectivity but also by access to the additional resources that allow people to use technology well.” Due to the affordability of many information technologies today the current meaning of digital divide is

¹ Third space is a term used to describe an online space where digital natives immerse themselves fully in the use of technology for everyday activities.

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Comment [2]: Use current peer-reviewed research published within the last 3-5 years.

In this case the most important interpretation of the the e in elearning is that it be online.

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Comment [3]: Avoid expletive constructions in academic writing.

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CCS_expletive.html

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Comment [4]: Do you want to improve the challenges or do you want to respond to challenges more effectively?

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Comment [5]: You are forgetting one essential role, the role for which you are training ---scholar.

The scholar’s role is to ensure that all models and interventions are based on sound theoretical precepts which have been tested and verified by rigorous research.

Focus on using a current theory of e-learning as a framework for your critical analysis of the topic at hand.

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Comment [6]: Cite rather than footnote.

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Comment [7]: From what theoretical perspective do these *common* definitions derive?

Unfortunately, in the field of elearning scholarship, no common definition really exists. It all depends on your theoretical lens.

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Comment [8]: Use resources published within the last 3-5 years.

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Comment [9]: Avoid constructions like this and write in the active voice.

The increasing affordability of technology changes the digital divide from an issue of access to one of skills.

changing from having access, to knowing how to use the technologies. In this way the digital divide still acts as a challenge for education and more specifically e-learning environments. In education the digital divide has now become more about closing the gap between using the resources appropriately to obtain quality educational outcomes than the need to have access to this technology. The quality of learning ~~outcomes~~ and more importantly the successful use of ~~the expected~~ technology resources all hinge on the ~~amount of~~ experience and comfort level each learner has with ~~these specific resource~~ technologies.

One solution to this challenge is for the e-mentor to implement a learning environment that encourages collaboration. Allowing learners to collaborate, share, and create together will increase student use of various technologies, enhance their e-learning experience, and support self-directed and ongoing learning. The e-mentor must also be mindful of the e-learner's needs, by being accepting of different ability levels, and willing to allow student choice with the expected performance outcomes. The e-learner should ask questions, seek additional information from reputable sources, self-reflect often, and interact with other learners in academic discourse related to the online learning environment. Having an online community where e-learners can collaborate in a safe and respected learning environment will help close the gap of the new digital divide, and in doing so helps to create a culture of digital natives specific to e-learning.

Student Motivation

Although motivating students can only truly happen intrinsically creating the right online environment where students want to learn is the responsibility of the e-mentor. According to Martin, in today's online environments ~~there is a~~ lack of teacher presence, face-to-face (f2f) interaction, and tech support (2009). The most well planned and explicitly laid out online

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Comment [10]: *Although true motivation is intrinsic, ...*

What theory of elearning is represented in this assumption? How does the theory work to explain and predict behavior in an online learning setting? What empirical research has been conducted to test and verify this theory in an online learning context?

instructional environment will not be enough to sustain student interest and support intrinsic motivation. On the other hand learners new to the e-world typically lack the level of metacognition awareness, time management skills, and self-directed learning needed to be successful (Martin, 2009).

To promote student motivation the primary role falls to the teacher to anticipate and prevent motivational challenges unique to e-learning. One way this can be done is by increasing f2f interactions through a variety of technological modes. E-learning does not have to be isolated to merely email communication and web based only classroom environments. E-learners often have anxiety about learning online and need to feel connected and safe in their new learning environments. E-learning environments often lack a variety of communication options creating an unwelcoming online learning atmosphere, which only the instructor can control (Terry & Leppa, 2009; Martin, 2009). To help alleviate student anxiety e-mentors should provide various and alternative ways of interacting and communicate through the use of such applications like Skype, chat forums, or discussion boards.

Course Design

“The amount of time needed to teach in an online environment is an important consideration” says Leanna Archambault (2010), in an article she wrote entitled “Identifying and Addressing Teaching Challenges in K-12 Online Environments” (p. 1). In this article Archambault indicated that teachers reported an increase in their workload because “teachers in this area are continually improving their practice with new content, new technologies, and new ways of engaging students, it can be particularly time-consuming” she remarked (pp. 1-2). Lack of appropriate time can be a huge contributing factor to poor course development but can be

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Comment [11]: What theoretical perspective of elearning does Martin use to frame her research?

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Comment [12]: Focus on ideas and concepts rather than authors or publications. In-text citations are adequate attribution and they do not interfere as much with the flow of your argument.

Glen 6/25/13 4:04 AM

Comment [13]: ...adequate?

easily addressed by focusing on collaboration and methodologies appropriate to an e-learning environment.

Collaboration. E-mentors, like their e-learners, should constantly be working within collaborative e-learning communities to create a course framework in which a holistic approach to e-learning can be implemented. With the input and support of other colleagues well planned out environments will begin to take shape. During this process time spent sharing, developing, and creating is distributed amongst other like-minded scholars.

Methodologies. Pedagogical models have dominated traditional educational institutions for decades using asynchronous teacher-student interactions. E-learning lends itself more naturally to an Andragogical approach using synchronous interactions while using technology to drive instruction and learning (Martin, 2009). The most effective online environment has a two-tiered educational approach to course design using a combination of pedagogical and andragogical methodologies. This two-tiered approach speaks to another challenge facing poor course design by being conscious of the different metacognitive levels each learner possess as they enter and grow within the e-learning environment.

In "Thinking about Thinking: Developing Metacognition in Children" Fisher (1998), reported that some learners are more capable at learning effective strategies and applying them appropriately, while others can seem to have no approach to learning at all (Metacognition section para. 4). Metacognitive abilities and awareness change with age, and older students are more successful learners because they have internalized a greater quantity of metacognitive information. Failure to use these strategies may not be related so much to age but to experience, and embedding interventions into the course design can help e-learners develop self-learning awareness and attain overall success in e-learning environments.

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Comment [14]: How does this increase the time available?

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Comment [15]: While this article was published in 2009 many of the sources that she used were far older.

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Comment [16]: How has this been tested with empirical research?

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Comment [17]: Read and cite peer-reviewed primary research published within the last 3-5 years.

E-mentors can effectively deal with this challenge by scaffolding the lessons and courses with a fusion of pedagogical and andragogical approaches. In a pedagogical setting the teacher has full control over the content, goals, and outcomes. Given the four levels of metacognitive awareness, adapted from Swartz and Perkins (1998), the pedagogical approach is best used with learners who are at the tacit and aware use levels. At these awareness levels learners are making decisions based on e-mentor prescribed lessons and are slowly becoming aware of good e-learning strategies and decision-making through coaching and course development. In order for learners to be successful at these levels of awareness, a pedagogical approach to the course design and e-learning environment is imperative.

As learners develop the higher two levels of metacognitive awareness, strategic and reflective use, the approach shifts to an environment where learners are demonstrating thinking and problem solving skills. This is an environment where lessons are developed using an andragogical approach giving the learner choice and the opportunity to build self-directed learning skills. At this level learners are thinking reflectively before, during, and after each lesson. This two-tiered approach to e-learning concentrates on the development of a learner's metacognition, and in doing so, supports the learner's highest potential for success in an e-learning environment.

Faculty Development

Presenting the challenges and best practices of an online learning environment to faculty and staff can be greeted with mixed opinions and reviews, as many teachers have their own ideas of what makes up a successful learning environment. Many of these ideas are formed from traditional educational and pedagogical ideas. A teacher's comfort level with technology will also play a part in how they view online learning and its development. The presenter should be

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Comment [18]: Which challenge. New paragraph requires the reintroduction of the main concept.

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Comment [19]: This information is interesting but very out of date.
How has this information been interpreted in the current elearning context?
What theory of elearning is implicit in this framework?
How does this theory explain and predict behavior in an online learning setting?
How has this notion been test by empirical research?

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Comment [20]: Who adapted this?

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Comment [21]: Support all assertions with appropriate citations.

sensitive to the various ability levels of technology use and should present the challenges and best practices of an e-learning environment keeping the same elements discussed above in mind.

The presenter should develop a learning experience for teachers, now the learners themselves, which supports a combination of online and f2f interactions. The presenter should provide opportunities for learners to work in collaborative groups, creating a supportive online example of collaborative communities. The presentation should encompass various forms of technology like email, google docs, and cloud sharing to address the different learner levels of technology use. Finally the presenter should provide technology support and promote sharing by identifying the various ability levels and types of technology used for purposeful grouping. This will help group learners by abilities, and then later to form learning communities intended to build capacity and familiarity with different forms of technology. As learners develop a higher degree of comfort using unfamiliar technologies they will become more proficient and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and best practices facing e-learning today.

Conclusion

With so many different ways to define and deconstruct online learning it is the conclusion of this author that e-learning is an innovative approach to education. It is a holistic view of a technology driven ecological system, meeting the needs of today's tech savvy student. It is an environment made up of social, cultural, and technological resources in a supportive and safe third space. However, in order for learners to be successful in this space they must overcome challenges along the way. ~~Both~~ learners and mentors must embrace the shift from traditional classroom practices to the e-learning world of education. Although today's learner is tech literate and technology seems to be an embedded part of every day life, the use of technology in an educational online environment can be overwhelming without the proper supports.

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Comment [22]: Proper noun -- Google

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Comment [23]: ...learner

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Comment [24]: Unclear referent.

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Comment [25]: ..learner

E-mentors must keep in mind ~~the fact~~ that in an online learning environment they hold the primary responsibility in keeping e-learners motivated. This can only happen by using and implementing various information technologies. E-mentors are responsible for addressing learner anxiety and providing support for those learners who lack experience using technology to achieve educational outcomes. This continuous and ongoing support is how the new digital divide gap decreases and the abundant technology resources available to e-learners are comfortably and purposefully used in the e-learning environment. Finally, and probably the most important for the e-mentor to focus on are the elements of course design. Developing a solid course, which supports student and teacher collaborative communities, pedagogy, metacognition, and andragogy. These elements, if considered holistically and thoughtfully embedded into the e-learning environment will prove to sustain learner success while meeting today's tech savvy student.

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Comment [26]: Many terms that are used casually in everyday language must be used precisely in advanced scholarly. In e learning, very few assumptions have been demonstrated with enough certainty to achieve the level of fact.

Glen 6/25/13 4:28 AM

Comment [27]: Sentence fragment.

Glen 6/25/13 4:28 AM

Comment [28]: See comment G26 above.

References

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Glen 6/25/13 4:29 AM

Comment [29]: Single space references with a double space between references.

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Comment [30]: Retrieved

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Comment [31]: Read and cite peer-reviewed primary sources published within the last 3-5 years.

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Comment [32]: Not part of the title.

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Comment [33]: Rethinking. Capitalize the first word of the title and the subtitle.